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ABSTRACT

This report of a personal interview research survey conducted for the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports in 1972 presents the following findings: (a) 45 percent of all adult Americans do not engage in any form of exercise; (b) walking is the most popular form of exercise, followed by bicycle riding, swimming, calisthenics, bowling, and jogging; (c) persons who received physical education during the course of their schooling are more likely to engage in exercise than those who did not; (d) concern about health is the major reason for exercising; and (e) the federal government is the source of information about physical fitness cited most often by respondents. The paper contains detailed reports on exercise habits, physical education, sports participation, and public information on physical fitness. There are 29 tables or charts in this report. (HMD)

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NATIONAL ADULT PHYSICAL FITNESS SURVEY

The information reported in this special edition of the Newsletter is taken from a personal interview research survey conducted for the PCPFS by Opinion Research Corporation of Princeton, N.J. Advanced probability sampling techniques were employed in the design and execution of the survey, which involved interviews with 3,075 men and women aged 22 years and over. Only one interview was taken per household, and interviewing was conducted in 1972 between September 15 and October 6, and between November 14 and December 10. Prior to actual field work, five forms of the questionnaire were pretested among 45 respondents.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

49 Million Americans Don't Exercise

Forty-five percent of all adult Americans (roughly 49 million of the 109 million adult men and women) do not engage in physical activity for the purpose of exercise. These sedentary Americans tend to be older, less well educated, and less affluent than those who do exercise.

Only 55% of American adults do any exercise at all, but 57% of American adults say they believe they get enough exercise. Paradoxically, those who don't exercise are more inclined to believe they get enough exercise than are those who do exercise. Sixty-three percent of the nonexercisers say they get enough exercise, while only 53% of the exercisers believe they are as physically active as they should be.

Walking Most Popular Form of Exercise

Of the 60 million adult Americans who engage in various forms of exercise, nearly 44 million walk for exercise. More than 18 million ride bicycles for exercise (as opposed to recreation); 14 million swim for exercise; 14 million do calisthenics; and 6.5 million jog.

More than one-half of the men and women who walk for exercise do so "daily" or "almost every day," and nearly three-fourths of them walk at least 20 minutes per outing. Relatively few cyclists, swimmers or joggers come up to the PCPFS standard for "regular exercise" (a minimum of three times per week). For instance, one-third of the persons who say they jog do so only once or twice a week, and about the same number jog no more than 10 minutes per outing. The swimmers and cyclists are similarly irregular in their exercise habits, but their workouts tend to be of greater duration.

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School-College Athletes More Active as Adults

More than two-thirds of the adults who participated in two or more sports in school and/or college exercise now, while fewer than one-half of those who did not participate in sports exercise now. The former athletes' greater liking for exercise is especially pronounced in the more vigorous activities. Proportionately, twice as many of the athletes ride bicycles and do calisthenics, and three times as many jog and swim for exercise.

The persons least likely to be exercising now are those who did not have physical education in school or college. Only 6% of them ride bicycles, only 4% swim, and only 2% jog. Probably one reason for these extremely low levels of participation is that the men and women who did not have physical education tend to be older.

Concern About Health Major Reason for Exercising

Nearly one-half of the men and women who exercise do so for reasons of health. Among their most frequent comments are, *"It's good for my heart,"* and, *"I can breathe better."* One-fourth of those who exercise do so to lose weight, and about the same number do so for enjoyment and relaxation. Men are somewhat more likely than women to exercise for reasons of health, or because they enjoy it, while women are twice as likely to exercise to lose weight.

Physical Education Spotty at Lower Grade Levels

Nearly every American under 40 has taken physical education at some point during his or her school years, but only about four of 10 have taken it in elementary school. Among adults under 30 years of age, 93% have had physical education, but fewer than one-half of them (47%) say they had it in elementary school. Among these younger adults, the p.e. participation figure rises to 68% for junior high school and 85% for high school.

Overall, 71% of American men and women have taken physical education, with 36% taking it in elementary school, 42% in junior high school, and 57% in high school. If a person has not completed high school, there is a less than 50% chance that he or she has had physical education.

Bowling Most Popular Participatory Sport

Bowling is the American adult's favorite participatory sport in terms of total number of participants. Twenty percent of American men and women bowl, and nearly one-half of these take part in organized league and tournament play.

Swimming ranks second in terms of participation, with 18% of the adult population taking part, and it is first in terms of frequency of participation. One of every eight adult swimmers swims "daily" or "almost every day," and one-half of them swim at least "once or twice a week."

Other popular participatory sports, in order of rank, are: golf; 9%; softball, 8.5%; tennis, 6%; volleyball, 5%; water skiing, 3%; and skiing, 2%.

One of every six golfers plays "three to five times a week," but participation in the other sports is generally infrequent. Nearly one-half of all bowlers bowl "less than once a month," and only one bowler in five bowls as often as "once or twice a week."

Of all the most popular participatory sports, swimming, golf and tennis are the only three in which as many as 10% of the participants take part often enough (at least three times a week) to meet PCPFS standards for "regular exercise," and thereby to at least partially satisfy the body's need for regular physical activity.

Many Americans Strangers to Competitive Sport

Sixty percent of American women and 38% of American men, or almost exactly one-half of the total adult population, have not participated in competitive sport on either an intramural or an interschool level. However, among those who have taken part in competitive athletics, 74% of the men and 63% of the women have participated in two or more sports.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SOURCE OF FITNESS INFORMATION

Slightly more than six of every 10 adult Americans say they have recently seen or heard some information about the importance of physical fitness and sports. Of this group, 40% name the "Federal government," or simply "government," as the source of the information. Other sources cited, in the order of frequency, include the American Medical Association; the YMCA, or a similar organization; and Blue Cross/Blue Shield, or other insurance companies.

For those persons who are aware of the national fitness emphasis, television has been the primary source of information. Five of every six say they saw or heard the information on TV, as compared to the fewer than one in four who list newspapers and magazines.

As might be expected, fitness awareness is highest among those who exercise regularly and lowest among those--the elderly, the poor, and the poorly educated--who exercise least. The degree of awareness is slightly higher among men than among women.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Notes on Reading This Report:

Most of the data are presented in percentage form. Where the percent signs appear only in the left-hand column, percentages read across. Where the percent signs appear only in the top row, percentages read down.

Percentages may not add to 100 due to the omission of answer categories such as "not reported." Where percentages add to more than 100, this is because the question permitted multiple answers. Percentages shown in answer categories in a table may not add to the percent asked a given question because of computer rounding. An asterisk (*) in a table signifies any value of less than one-half of one percent.

I. EXERCISE HABITS

Many People Do Not Exercise Regularly

Respondents were shown a card with exercises listed on it. Over four people in 10 say they do none of these exercises. In terms of absolute numbers this is about 49 million adults age 22 or older.

It is the younger, better educated, and more affluent people who are inclined to exercise. An example is shown here:

	% Who Say They Ride a Bicycle
22 to 29 years old	28
30 to 39	25
40 to 49	19
50 to 59	12
60 or older	3
High school incomplete	8
High school complete	19
Some college	28
Family income under $5,000	7
$5,000 to $6,999	10
$7,000 to $9,999	16
$10,000 to $14,999	21
$15,000 or over	27

This pattern holds for all of the exercises.

Also, those who participated in school sports are more likely to exercise than are those who did not participate in school sports. More detail on specific exercises as they are related to participation in school sports, physical education, city size, weight change and smoking habits are shown later.

Exercises

"Which, if any, of these exercises are you now doing?"

	%Total Public	%Men	%Women
None	45	44	45
Walk for exercise	40	38	41
Ride a bicycle	17	16	17
Swim	13	16	10
Do calisthenics	13	12	14
Jog	6	8	3
Lift weights	3	5	1
Other	5	6	4

Exercises and School Sports

Total Public Exercise Habits

Participation in school sports	%Exercise Now	%Do Not Exercise Now
More than one sport	68	32
One sport	54	46
No sports	47	53

About Half of the People Who Walk for Exercise Say They Do So Fairly Regularly

Over half the people who say they walk for exercise claim to walk daily or at least one to two times a week. Often the period of exercise lasts more than 20 minutes.

People who do calisthenics also tend to do them on a regular basis but, not surprisingly, for a shorter period of time than is the case with people who walk.

Bike riding and swimming are about evenly distributed in terms of frequency, and a number of people who ride or swim report exercise periods of over 20 minutes.

Frequency and Duration of Exercise

	Total Public					
	Walk	Ride Bike	Swim	Calis-thenics	Jog	Lift Weights
% Asked	40%	17%	13%	13%	6%	3%
Daily or almost every day	22	3	2	6	1	1
3-5 times a week	6	3	2	3	1	1
1-2 times a week	7	5	4	2	2	1
A few times a month	2	3	3	1	1	*
About once a month	1	1	1	*	*	*
Less than once a month	1	1	2	*	*	*
Not reported	1	*	*	*	*	*
1-10 minutes	2	1	*	3	2	*
11-20 minutes	7	3	1	5	1	1
21-30 minutes	11	6	2	3	1	1
31 minutes or more	18	6	8	1	1	1
Not reported	2	1	1	1	*	*

Among the General Public, Those Who Have Participated in School Sports Are More Likely to Be Exercising Now Than Those Who Did Not Participate in School Sports

This pattern holds for all the exercises shown here.

"Which, if any, of these exercises are you now doing?"

	Participation in School Sports		
	%More Than One	% One	% None
Walk	46	40	35
Ride a bicycle	24	15	12
Swim	22	12	7
Do calisthenics	20	10	9
Jog	10	4	3
Lift weights	5	3	1
Other	7	3	3

9 OF 10 AMERICANS FAVOR SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education frequently is the first subject to get the axe when schools run short of money, but its importance is clearly recognized by the American public. When asked if they felt we should have physical education in the elementary schools, 90% of the men and women polled answered "yes." Only 4% were flatly opposed to p.e.

Support for physical education in the secondary schools and in college is slightly higher at 91%.

Of the 76 million adult Americans who have had physical education, more than 65 million think it was beneficial. Approximately 1.1 million persons think p.e. was "bad" for them. Another 9.8 million feel it "made no difference," or they have no opinion on the subject.

Similarly, People Who Took Physical Education Are More Likely to Exercise Now Than Those Who Did Not Participate in Physical Education

"Which, if any, of these exercises are you now doing?"

	Participation in Physical Education	
	%Yes	%No
Walk	43	33
Ride a bicycle	21	6
Swim	17	4
Do calisthenics	16	4
Jog	7	2
Lift weights	3	2
Other	5	3

More than 18 million American men and women ride bicycles for exercise.

City Size and Exercise Habits Are Not Strongly Related

People living in metropolitan areas are somewhat more likely than those in nonmetropolitan areas to walk or swim for exercise. However, the overall pattern of exercise habits does not differ meaningfully from nonmetropolitan to metropolitan areas.

"Which, if any, of these exercises are you now doing?"

	City Size	
	%Nonmetropolitan	%Metropolitan
Walk	35	41
Ride a bicycle	16	17
Do calisthenics	10	14
Swim	7	15
Jog	6	5
Lift weights	3	3
Other	3	5

Exercise Habits May Be Related Somewhat to Weight Change

There is some tendency for people with steady weight (since age 21) to engage in exercises to a greater extent than those who have gained or lost weight. In some cases this may reflect a desire to maintain a steady weight; in other cases it may be more a function of age--the younger age groups are those more likely to have a steady weight.

"Which, if any, of these exercises are you now doing?"

	Weight Change		
	%Gain	%Steady	%Loss
Walk	38	43	37
Ride a bicycle	13	21	17
Swim	10	17	12
Do calisthenics	10	17	11
Jog	4	8	5
Lift weights	2	4	4
Other	4	5	5

On Balance, There Is No Clear Relationship Between Smoking and Exercise

Although there are some differences between smokers and nonsmokers in terms of walking for exercise and swimming, the overall exercise pattern indicates no meaningful differences.

"Which, if any, of these exercises are you now doing?"

	Smoking Habit		
	%Current Smoker	%Quit Smoking	%Never Smoked
Walk	36	45	41
Ride a bicycle	17	16	17
Swim	16	14	9
Do calisthenics	12	13	13
Jog	5	7	5
Lift weights	3	3	3
Other	5	5	4

COMMERCIAL HEALTH SPAS ATTRACT SURPRISINGLY FEW

Ads for commercial health spas are a regular feature in almost every major newspaper. The ads usually show attractive men and women (especially women) clustered around a pool, and they list a wide range of exercise equipment and facilities available for use by members. Despite the apparent growth of such clubs, only 3% of American adults participate in the kind of body-building, slimnastics and conditioning programs run by the spas, as well as by YMCAs and some community agencies.

ONLY 1 OF 5 ADULTS HAS BEEN TOLD BY PHYSICIAN TO EXERCISE

When asked, physicians are among the most enthusiastic advocates of proper exercise as a form of preventive and remedial health care. However, many doctors apparently do not feel they know enough about exercise to prescribe it for their patients, or they simply are so busy that they don't take time to do so.

Four of every five adult Americans say they have never been advised by a physician to exercise. Of those who have been told to exercise, one in five say they have only been advised to do therapeutic exercise (i.e., exercises designed to rehabilitate an injured limb, or to strengthen the abdomen after surgery).

When medical doctors do prescribe exercise, their instructions tend to be rather mild and general in nature. Half of the persons advised to exercise say they were told to walk, and one-sixth report they were advised to do calisthenics. Another one-sixth say the kind of exercise was not specified.

As might be expected, overweight persons are more frequently urged to exercise than are their slimmer peers. Somewhat more surprising, in view of recent mortality trends, is the fact that more women (21%) than men (17%) are told to exercise.

The survey indicates that most Americans still take the doctor's advice seriously. Of all the persons who are exercising regularly, one-fourth have been told to do so by their physicians. However, some people just won't listen. Among those Americans who don't exercise regularly, one-seventh have been advised by their doctors to do so.

Only a Little Over Half of the General Public Feel They Get Enough Exercise

The data show that while many people feel they do not get enough exercise (40%), more say they do get enough (57%). The percentage of people saying they do not get enough exercise translates to about 44 million people.

In particular, the older respondents are more inclined to say they get enough exercise than are the younger respondents.

Amount of Exercise

"Do you feel that you get enough exercise or not?"

	%Get Enough	%Do Not	%No Opinion
Total public	57	40	3
Men	61	37	2
Women	54	43	3
22 to 29 years old	46	52	2
30 to 39	49	49	2
40 to 49	53	45	2
50 to 59	62	36	2
60 or older	71	25	4
Exercise now	53	46	1
Do not exercise now	63	33	4

Most People Who Exercise Do So for Reasons Related to Health

Among those people who exercise, a number say they exercise for good health, to lose weight (primarily among women) and because they feel exercise is generally a good thing. Some respondents also find exercise enjoyable.

Those people who do not exercise (45%) were asked why. Their reasons include: not enough time (13%); they feel they get enough exercise by working (11%); there are medical reasons (8%); and age (5%).

Reasons for Exercising

"What are some of the reasons why you exercise?"
(Asked only of those who exercise)

	Total Public	Men	Women
% Asked	55%	56%	55%
For Good Health: good for my heart; to keep in shape; to stay in good physical condition; I can breathe better	23	26	20
Good For You in General: makes me feel better; good for me; I feel like it's good for me	18	8	12
To Lose Weight: to keep slim; I like to keep my shape; I'm a little on the heavy side; to flatten my stomach	13	9	17
Enjoyment: I like doing it; for pleasure and relaxation; for recreation	12	13	11
Doctor Told Me to	3	4	3

II. PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Most People Have Taken Physical Education at Some Time While They Were in School

About three-fourths of the general public report having taken physical education and there is little, if any, difference between men and women. Note, however, that age is a factor, probably reflecting the increasing incidence of physical education programs in our school systems. Nearly everyone under 40 has had p.e. classes. This proportion drops to under half among those 60 years old or over.

As might be expected, participation in physical education depends somewhat on the amount of time spent in the educational system. Those who do not finish high school are less likely to have taken physical education classes than are those who have attended college.

Physical Education

"Did you ever take physical education or gym class while you were in school?"

	%Yes	%No	%Not Reported
Total public	71	28	1
Men	70	29	1
Women	71	28	1
22 to 29 years old	93	7	*
30 to 39	89	10	1
40 to 49	74	25	1
50 to 59	67	32	1
60 or older	39	58	3
High school incomplete	45	53	2
High school complet	87	12	1
Some college	93	7	*

High Schools Appear to Have Been More Involved in Physical Education Than Were Lower Level Schools or Colleges

Over half of the total public say they had physical education in high school. Among those who completed high school or went to college, the proportion taking physical education in high school is about 80%. This incidence of classes in high school is higher by at least 20 percentage points than the incidence in elementary school, junior high or college.

Physical Education

"Were these classes in elementary school, junior high, high school, or in college?" (Asked only of those who had physical education or gym class in school)

	% Asked	% Elementary	% Junior High	% High School	% College	% Not Reported
Total public	70	36	42	57	12	1
Men	70	36	41	56	14	1
Women	71	35	42	56	9	1
22 to 29 years old	93	47	68	85	20	*
30 to 39	89	45	62	76	15	1
40 to 49	74	37	43	63	11	*
50 to 59	67	32	34	46	8	2
60 or older	39	22	14	23	6	1
High school incomplete	45	26	25	22	0	1
High school complete	87	37	51	80	0	1
Some college	93	51	60	86	52	*

"All Four," a permissible answer category, has been added to the results for elementary, junior high, high school and college.

Most People Who Have Taken Gym Classes Feel That Physical Education Is Beneficial

Among the 70% of the general public who have taken physical education, a strong majority say it was good for them. Only a few say it made no difference and almost no one believes gym classes were detrimental.

Effects of Physical Education

"Do you feel that gym classes were good for you, bad for you, or didn't it make any difference?" (Asked only of those who had physical education or gym class in school)

	% Asked	% Good	% Bad	% No Difference	% Don't Know
Total public	70	60	1	8	1
Men	70	62	1	7	1
Women	71	59	1	10	1

There Is Strong Support For Physical Education at All Grade Levels

Majorities of both men and women feel that people should have physical education in school. This support is across the board and comes from all subgroups. Only a few people in any age, economic or social class say people should not have physical education.

Should People Have Physical Education?

"Do you feel that most people should have physical education in elementary school or shouldn't they?"

"Do you feel that most people should have physical education in junior high, senior high, or college or shouldn't they?"

	% Total Public	% Men	% Women
Elementary school			
Yes	90	89	90
No	4	5	3
Makes no difference	4	4	4
Other/no opinion	2	2	3
Junior high, senior high, or college			
Yes	91	91	90
No	2	2	2
Makes no difference	4	4	4
Other/no opinion	3	3	4

SCHOOLS, CLUB PROS PROVIDE MOST SPORT SKILLS INSTRUCTION

Despite America's leisure boom, formal skills instruction in the participatory sports still is not widespread. One in five adults has taken swimming lessons, and one in seven has had instruction in bowling, but there is no other sport in which as many as 10% of the adult men and women have been taught by an instructor.

Of those persons who have had formal skills instruction, most say they received it at school, or from a club professional (golf, tennis, skiing, etc.). YMCAs and community recreation programs are a major factor in providing instruction only for the sport of swimming. Surprisingly, only about 11% of the persons who have had tennis lessons say they took them as part of a recreation department program.

III. SPORTS PARTICIPATION

Among Men There Is a Fairly High Degree of Participation in School Sports; Women, However, Are Less Active

While most women have taken physical education, there was apparently little opportunity or interest in participating in competitive sports. A majority of women (60%) say they did not complete in a team sport while in school. Men, on the other hand, are far more likely to have been on a sports team. The top mentioned sports are:

- Baseball
- Basketball
- Football
- Track and field

Also, a person who engaged in one sport is quite likely to have engaged in at least one other.

Participate in	%Men	%Women
Two or more sports	46	25
One sport	16	15
No sports	38	60

From a slightly different standpoint, 74% of the men and 63% of the women who have participated in any sport did so in two or more sports.

Also, as was the case with physical education classes, it is the better educated and higher income people who were most active in school sports. (This could be partly explained by the fact that they were in school more years and thus exposed to the possibility of sports for a longer time.) An example is shown here.

	%Men			
School sports	Less Than High School	High School	Some College	Not Reported
More than one	18	33	48	1
One	37	35	25	3
None	54	26	19	1

Competitive School Sports

"Please tell me which of the sports on this list you have ever participated in on a competitive basis--that is, as a member of an organized school team which played other school teams or teams within the school for as much as a season"

	%Men	%Women
Baseball	37	12
Basketball	32	23
Football	30	*
Track and Field	20	5
Softball	18	12
Volleyball	9	18
Soccer	7	3
Swimming	8	5
Gymnastics	6	6
Bowling	6	4
Wrestling	6	*
Tennis	4	5
Handball	4	2
Golf	2	*
Other	5	3
None	38	60

Among Men, Team Competition Tended to Be With Other School Teams Rather Than Just Within the School

The data indicate that competition between schools, at least for the men, is highest for baseball, basketball, football and track. The other sports are more evenly split, with about equal numbers saying they engaged in interschool sports as say they participated in intramural sports.

For the women, team sports programs for all sports were about equally divided between competition with other schools and competition only within the school.

Interschool vs. Intramural Sports

"Did this team play teams from other schools or only other teams within the school?" (Asked only of those who participated in sports on a competitive basis)

	%Men			%Women		
	Asked	Other Schools	Within School	Asked	Other Schools	Within School
Baseball	37	26	10	12	5	7
Basketball	32	24	8	23	12	11
Football	30	24	6	*	*	*
Track and Field	20	17	3	5	3	2
Softball	18	10	8	12	5	7
Volleyball	9	3	6	18	7	11
Swimming	8	5	3	5	2	3
Soccer	7	5	2	3	1	2
Wrestling	6	4	2	*	0	*
Bowling	6	3	3	4	2	3
Gymnastics	6	2	4	6	1	4
Tennis	4	3	2	5	2	3
Handball	4	1	3	2	1	1
Golf	2	1	1	*	*	*
Other	5	3	1	3	1	1

Competitive Team Sports Programs Appear to Be Strongest at the High School Level

Most people who have participated on a school team did so in high school. This is true of both men and women. Among those respondents who attended college, the incidence of team membership drops after high school.

"Was this in elementary, junior high, high school, or in college?"
(Asked only of those who participated in sports on a competitive basis)

	%Men			
	Asked	Less Than High School	High School	College
Baseball	37	12	22	3
Basketball	32	8	21	3
Football	30	4	21	4
Track and Field	20	3	15	2
Softball	18	5	10	2
Volleyball	9	2	5	1
Swimming	8	1	6	1
Soccer	7	2	4	1
Gymnastics	6	2	4	1
Bowling	6	1	3	1
Wrestling	6	*	5	1
Handball	4	2	2	1
Tennis	4	*	3	1
Golf	2	*	1	1
Other	5	*	2	1

FEW MEN, WOMEN OWN OR USE SPECIALIZED EXERCISE GEAR

Exercise equipment sales have climbed steeply in recent years, but the market apparently remains wide open. Only 15% of the adult population reports owning specialized gear such as weights and rowing and cycling machines. (Bicycles, sports shoes, balls and items such as golf clubs and tennis racquets were not classified as "exercise equipment" in this survey.)

Weights are the most popular item of equipment, with 7% of the adult population reporting ownership. However, only 3% of all adults say they use weights regularly.

Level of Participation

"Was this in elementary, junior high, high school, or in college?" (Asked only of those who participated in sports on a competitive basis)

		%Women		
	Asked	Less Than High School	High School	College
Basketball	23	5	16	1
Volleyball	18	3	13	1
Baseball	12	5	6	*
Softball	12	4	8	1
Gymnastics	6	*	4	*
Track and Field	5	2	3	*
Swimming	5	1	3	1
Tennis	5	*	3	1
Bowling	4	*	3	1
Soccer	3	1	2	*
Handball	2	*	1	*
Football	*	*	*	*
Golf	*	*	*	*
Wrestling	*	0	*	0
Other	3	*	2	*

Tennis is one of the few sports which the participants play regularly.

Very Few Respondents Report Participation in Competitive Sports at the Present Time

The only sport with any drawing power in terms of participation on a competitive basis is bowling. About one person in 10 says he belongs to a bowling team. The remaining sports show very few people engaging in them on a competitive basis.

The incidence of participation in sports increases somewhat when noncompetitive recreation is considered. Here swimming and bowling are the most popular sports.

As the data below show, individuals who participated in school sports are more likely to be participating in noncompetitive sports now than are individuals who did not participate in school.

	%Total Public	
	Participation in Noncompetitive Sports at the Present Time	
	One or More Sports	No Sports
Participation in School Sports		
More than one sport	52	46
One sport	31	68
No sports	24	75

Competitive and Noncompetitive Sports at Present Time

"Which of these sports have you been playing on any competitive basis during the past 12 months--that is, as a member of an organized team?"

"Looking at this card, please tell me which of these sports (other than the ones you already mentioned) you now participate in or participated in during the last season on a noncompetitive basis--that is, either by yourself, or with friends?"

	Competitive Sports		Noncompetitive Sports	
	%Men	%Women	%Men	%Women
Bowling	8	9	11	12
Softball	6	2	6	3
Golf	4	1	9	4
Baseball	2	1	6	3
Basketball	2	*	6	2
Volleyball	1	1	4	4
Swimming	1	*	17	17
Tennis	1	*	5	5
Football	1	*	5	1
Handball	*	*	2	1
Gymnastics	*	*	1	2
Soccer	*	*	1	*
Track and Field	*	*	1	*
Wrestling	*	*	1	*
Water Skiing	#	#	4	2
Snow Skiing	#	#	2	2
Other	1	1	6	5

#Not asked

As Mentioned Earlier, People Who Participated in School Sports Are More Likely to Be Participating in Noncompetitive Sports Now Than Are People Who Did Not Participate in School Sports

"Looking at this card, please tell me which of these sports (other than the ones you already mentioned) you now participate in or participated in during the last season on a noncompetitive basis--that is, either by yourself, or with friends?"

	Participation in School Sports		
	%More Than One	% One	% None
Swimming	26	14	11
Bowling	17	7	9
Golf	11	5	4
Tennis	8	5	3
Basketball	8	3	2
Baseball	7	3	3
Softball	7	3	3
Volleyball	7	3	3
Water Skiing	7	2	1
Football	6	2	1
Snow Skiing	5	2	1
Handball	3	1	1
Gymnastics	2	*	1
Wrestling	2	*	*
Track and Field	1	*	*
Soccer	1	0	*
Other	5	3	3

People Who Took Physical Education Are More Likely to Participate in Noncompetitive Sports Now Than Are Those Who Did Not Take Physical Education

"Looking at this card, please tell me which of these sports (other than the ones you already mentioned) you now participate in or participated in during the last season on a noncompetitive basis--that is, either by yourself, or with friends?"

	Participation in Physical Education	
	%Yes	%No
Swimming	22	4
Bowling	15	4
Golf	8	2
Tennis	7	1
Volleyball	6	1
Baseball	5	2
Softball	5	1
Basketball	5	*
Football	4	1
Water Skiing	4	*
Snow Skiing	3	*
Gymnastics	2	1
Handball	2	*
Track and Field	1	*
Wrestling	1	*
Soccer	1	0
Other	4	1

Swimming is the second most popular participatory sport among American adults.

FEW OLDER ADULTS TAUGHT HOW TO SWIM

America clearly is No. 1 in swimming, whether it is judged by the number of people who swim, by the number of pools it has, or by the achievements of Mark Spitz and his teammates at the 1972 Olympic Games. Nevertheless, we aren't as much at home in the water as most of us probably believe. Only 21% of American adults have had formal swimming instruction, and the figure is only 7% for men and women aged 60 years and over.

America's swimming boom, of course, has been a relatively recent phenomenon. Among men and women aged 22 to 29 years, 39% have had swimming lessons, and the figure is 29% for persons in the 30-to-39 age bracket.

The incidence of instruction in swimming also correlates closely with education and income. Of those persons who have attended college, 44% have taken swimming lessons, and the figure is 34% among those whose families have incomes of $15,000 or more.

There Is Little, if Any, Meaningful Relationship Between City Size and Participation in Noncompetitive Sports

"Looking at this card, please tell me which of these sports (other than the ones you already mentioned) you now participate in or participated in during the last season on a noncompetitive basis--that is, either by yourself, or with friends?"

	City Size	
	%Non-Metropolitan	% Metropolitan
Swimming	11	19
Bowling	8	12
Golf	4	8
Baseball	4	4
Volleyball	4	4
Tennis	3	6
Basketball	3	4
Softball	3	4
Football	3	3
Water Skiing	3	3
Snow Skiing	2	3
Handball	1	2
Gymnastics	1	2
Soccer	1	1
Wrestling	1	1
Track and Field	*	1
Other	3	4

Participation in Sports Is Associated, Though Not Strongly, With Steady Weight, as Opposed to Gains or Losses

Weight change is determined by the relationship of present weight to weight at age 21. As might be expected, older people tend to gain weight rather than remain steady or lose weight. Thus, it is probably the relative youthfulness of the "steady" group in the table below that accounts for their greater-than-average participation in certain of the sports shown.

"Looking at this card, please tell me which of these sports (other than the ones you already mentioned) you now participate in or participated in during the last season on a noncompetitive basis--that is, either by yourself, or with friends?"

	Weight Change		
	%Gain	%Steady	%Loss
Swimming	12	23	16
Bowling	8	15	13
Golf	5	8	7
Tennis	3	8	6
Baseball	3	6	3
Softball	3	6	3
Volleyball	3	6	3
Basketball	2	5	5
Football	2	5	4
Water Skiing	2	4	4
Gymnastics	1	2	3
Handball	1	2	1
Snow Skiing	*	5	1
Wrestling	*	1	2
Soccer	*	1	1
Track and Field	*	1	*
Other	3	4	5

Smoking Habits and Participation in Noncompetitive Sports Do Not Appear to Be Related to Each Other

"Looking at this card, please tell me which of these sports (other than the ones you already mentioned) you now participate in or participated in during the last season on a noncompetitive basis--that is, either by yourself, or with friends?"

	Smoking Habits		
	% Current Smoker	% Quit Smoking	% Never Smoked
Swimming	19	18	15
Bowling	14	9	10
Golf	7	8	5
Tennis	5	6	5
Softball	5	4	4
Baseball	5	5	3
Basketball	5	5	3
Volleyball	4	4	4
Football	4	3	3
Water Skiing	4	2	3
Snow Skiing	3	1	2
Handball	1	2	1
Gymnastics	1	1	2
Wrestling	1	1	1
Track and Field	1	1	*
Soccer	*	*	1
Other	4	4	3

IV. PUBLIC INFORMATION ON PHYSICAL FITNESS

Many People Say They Have Heard or Seen Information About the Importance of Physical Fitness and Sports

Six in 10 of the general public claim awareness of recent physical fitness advertising. About one-third, however, say they have not seen or heard any recent information.

Awareness of information about physical fitness is higher in the upper income groups than in the lower. Note, however, that it is the groups who are most aware of physical fitness information that are the most physically active.

Physical Fitness Information

"Have you seen or heard any information recently about the importance of physical fitness and sports?"

	%Yes	%No	%Don't Know
Total public	61	37	2
Men	63	35	2
Women	59	39	2
Family income:			
Under $5,000	45	51	4
$5,000 - $6,999	57	41	2
$7,000 - $9,999	59	38	3
$10,000 - $14,999	70	29	1
$15,000 or over	73	25	2